

another, one may employ the exchange value of money: first sell two kilos of bad dates for two rupees, and then with the two rupees thus obtained buy a kilo of good dates. The intention in using this "device" is to conform to the *Shari'ah*, and not to by-pass it. The negation of the *Shari'ah* is neither intended here, nor does it actually take place. This principle holds good in the case of all the *Hiyal* which the *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have proposed in order to save people from practicing what the *Shari'ah* has prohibited. It is a travesty of the truth to compare them to or represent them as the "tricks" employed by the Jews to negate and mock the *Shari'ah*.

Verse 67

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقَرَةً قَالُوا
أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ٥

And when Musa said to his people, "Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Are you making us a laughing stock?" He said, "I seek refuge with Allah that I be one of the ignorant." (Verse 67)

According to *Mirqat*, a commentary on *Mishkat*, a man among the Israelites wanted to marry a girl, but her father refused. The suitor was so incensed that he killed the father, and disappeared. It is mentioned in *Ma'ālīm al-tanzīl* which says on the authority of *Kalbi* that Allah had not yet sent down any injunction with regard to man-slaughter. If it was so, this shows that the incident happened before the Torah was revealed. Anyhow, the Israelites requested Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to tell them how to trace the culprit. Under the commandment of Allah, he asked them to sacrifice a cow. As was their regular habit, they started raising all kinds of doubts and objections, of which the next verses give us the details.

Verses 68 - 71

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا
فَارِصٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ٦ قَالُوا
ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْ هِيَ قَالَتْ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ

صَفْرَاءُ ۖ فَاقْعُ لُونَهَا تَسْرُ النَّظِيرَيْنِ ۝ قَالُوا اَدْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ
لَنَا مَا هِيَ اِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشْبَهُ عَلَيْنَا وَاِنَّا اِنْ شَاءَ اللّٰهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ۝
قَالَ اِنَّهُ يَقُولُ اِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَّا ذَلُولُ تُشِيرُ الْاَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقَى
الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةً لَّا شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا الْتَنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبْحُوهَا
وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ۝

They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us what sort she be." He said, "He says she be - a cow neither too old, nor too young - of some middle age in between. Now, do what you are being asked to do." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He make it clear to us what colour she be." He said: "He says that she be a yellow cow, rich yellow in her colour, pleasing for all to look at." They said, "Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us of what sort she be, for we are confused about this cow, and if Allah wills, We shall certainly take the right course." He said, "He says that it be a cow which is not tractable for tilling the soil or in watering the fields, sound and without blemish." They said, "Now, you have come up with the truth." Then, they slaughtered her, although it did not appear they would do it. (Verses 68-71)

These Verses show how the Israelites were disposed to disobedience, and how this inclination expressed itself in different forms. The *Hadith* says that if these people had obeyed Allah's commandment without raising so many doubts and asking unnecessary questions, such strict condition would not have been imposed on them, and the sacrifice of any cow whatsoever would have been accepted.

Verses 72 - 73

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَرَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ۝
فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بَعْضَهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللّٰهُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ۝

And when you killed a man, and began to push and pull

each other for it; while Allah was to bring forth what you were holding back. So, We said, "Strike him with a part of it." Similar to that, Allah revives the dead. And He shows you His signs, so that you may understand. (Verses 72-73)

The murderer had his supporters who wanted to hide his crime, and hence began accusing different people. But Allah willed that the criminal should be brought to book, and appointed a miraculous way of identifying him -- that is, the dead body of the murdered man should be touched with a part of the flesh of the sacrificial cow. When this was done, the dead man came back to life, announced the name of his murderer, and died again.

This miraculous event is a manifestation of the omnipotence of Allah, and Holy Qur'ān presents it as an argument against those who deny the Resurrection of the dead for the Last Judgment. Verse 73 says that this precedent should induce people to make use of their reason, and see that what has happened in a past instance can as easily happen in a future instance.

With regard to this event one may ask as to why Allah made the resurrection of the dead man depend upon his being touched with a part of flesh when he had the power to bring the man back to life without the intervention of any such device; or, one may ask as to why the dead man should have been brought back to life when the name of the murderer could have been revealed even otherwise. In answer to this, we shall say that Allah is omnipotent, and does not act under any kind of compulsion, but that all His actions proceed from His all-embracing wisdom. Moreover, it is He alone who knows, and can know, the *raison d'être* of what He does. The Shari'ah does not oblige us to discover the *raison d'être* of each and every divine act, nor is it necessary or possible that we should be able to comprehend the *raison d'être* in each case. The best way in such a case is to accept what Allah or the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, and to keep quiet.

Let us say a word about the arrangement and sequence of the events. Verse 72 relates how a man was murdered, and how people started accusing each other. This is the beginning of the story which has been related earlier in Verses 67-71. This chronological order has

not been preserved in the narration, but inverted, and this re-arrangement has a subtle significance. This long section of the Sūrah (Chapter) has been dealing with the transgressions of the Israelites, and this is just what the Holy Qur'ān intends to bring out in narrating different stories, the narrating of stories not being an object in itself here. The present story is meant to show two misdeeds - firstly, committing a murder and then trying to hide it; secondly, raising uncalled-for objections to divine commandments. If the chronological order had been kept up, the readers would have supposed that it was only the first of these that was really intended, while the second was added only by way of completing the story. The present arrangement clearly shows that both the misdeeds have been equally emphasized.

Injunctions and related consideration

In this incident the statement of the murdered man was considered evidence for condemning the murderer, because Allah had informed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام through revelation that the man would, on coming back to life, speak the truth. Otherwise, one cannot be declared as being guilty of murder without proper evidence, the rules of which have been laid down by the Shari'ah.

Verse 74

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً
وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشْقُقُ
فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا
اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ٥

When, even after that your hearts were hardened, as if they were like the rocks, or still worse in hardness. For surely among the rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth, and there are others which burst out and water flows from them, and there are still others which fall down in fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 74)

The Sūrah has been relating a number of incidents which show that the Israelites were always prone to disobedience and rebellion

and had to undergo punishment again and again. Such an experience should have taught them humility and obedience. On the contrary, their hearts became all the more hardened against divine guidance. This insensibility led them into further misdeeds and transgressions. The present verse describes their degeneracy, and warns them that Allah knows everything they have been doing, and will punish them for their evil deeds.

In contrasting the hearts of the Israelites with stones, the verse refers to three states of the latter: (1) Some stones give forth a great amount of water. (2) Others give forth only a small quantity. (3) Still others do not give forth water, but fall down from their place for fear of Allah.

The first two of these states are a matter of everyday observation, but the third may be subject to doubt, for the ability to feel fear requires reason and sensibility, and the stones, as one supposes, do not possess these faculties. But reason is not always a necessary requisite for the ability to feel fear - after all, animals do feel fear, even though they do not possess reason. Sensibility is, of course, necessary. But there is no rational argument which should deny sensibility to minerals. For sensibility depends on life, and the minerals may possibly possess a kind of subtle life which man may not be aware of. In fact, scientists have recently discovered the signs of life and sensibility in minerals too. Anyhow, an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'an carries a validity and an authority which no physical science or rational argument can dispute.

Then, we do not claim that fear of Allah is always the only cause which makes a stone fall down. For, the Holy Qur'an itself says that this cause operates only in the case of some stones. So, there may be different causes which make stones fall down; some of these causes may be purely physical, while one of them may be the fear of Allah.

The order in which the three kinds of stones have been mentioned is very subtle, and, in view of the meaning and purpose intended, extremely expressive and significant. The verse places in the highest degree those stones whose affectivity is so strong that rivers gush forth from them, and provide sustenance to beasts and men. In

contrast to them, it has been suggested, the hearts of the Jews are so hard that they are incapable of feeling any sympathy for their fellow-men even in suffering and pain, and hence incapable of wishing to do them good. In the second degree come the stones which do serve the creatures of Allah, but to a lesser extent. But the hearts of Jews are harder than even these. To the lowest degree of affectivity belong those stones which do not benefit anyone, but can at least 'feel' the fear of Allah. But the Jews are devoid of even this minimum degree of sensitivity.

Verse 75

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ
كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَحْرَفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

Do you still fancy that they will believe you, although a group of them used to hear the word of Allah, and then, after having understood it, used to distort it knowingly? (Verse 75)

The Muslims used to take great pains in trying to make the Jews accept Islam. Having recounted so many stories of the perversity of the Jews, the Holy Qur'ān points out to the Muslims that they cannot expect such a people to be sensible, and asks them not to worry much about them. For, some of the Jews have been committing an even more heinous sin - they used to change and distort the Word of Allah in spite of knowing the ignominy of such a deed. So, the Holy Qur'ān wants the Muslims to realize that men who are so enslaved to their desires and so shameless in their pursuit of evil, cannot be expected to listen to anyone.

The "Word of Allah" mentioned in the verse refers to the Torah which the Jews had "heard" from the prophets, and the distortion pertains to the changes made in the words themselves or in the sense or in both; or it refers to the words of Allah which the seventy men had heard directly on the Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) where they had gone to seek divine confirmation of what Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been telling and the distortion pertains to their declaration before their people that Allah had promised to forgive them if they could not act upon certain commandments.

The Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ may

not have themselves been involved in some of these transgressions, but since they did not abhor the misdeeds of their forefathers, they are to be considered as their counterparts.

Verse 76

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِعَضُفِهِمْ إِلَى
بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ
عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ٥

And when they meet those who believe, they say, "We believe." But when some of them meet others in private, they say, "Do you tell them what Allah has disclosed to you so that they may thereby argue against you before your Lord? Have you, then, no sense?" (Verse 76)

Some of the Jews, seeing the growing power of the Muslims in Madinah and around it, pretended to have accepted Islam. In order to assure the Muslims of their sincerity and to win their favour, these hypocrites would now and then disclose to them that the Torah itself had given out the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and mentioned the Holy Qur'an. But when they met other Jews who openly declared their adherence to Judaism, they would admit that they were only trying to deceive the Muslims, and were otherwise quite loyal to their own faith. On such occasions, those of the other group used to reprimand them for revealing to the Muslims what they themselves were trying to keep concealed, for a knowledge of the relevant verses of the Torah could be very useful for the Muslims in order to defeat the Jews in their argument.

Verses 77 - 79

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ٥ وَمِنْهُمْ
أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِي وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ٥
فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ
عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ٥

Are they not aware that Allah knows what they conceal and what they manifest? And some among them are illiterate who have no knowledge of the Book but have some fancies, and they do nothing but make conjectures. So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, "This is from Allah", so that they may gain a small price out of it. Then, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn. (Verses 77-79)

Allah reminds the Jews that He is omniscient, and knows what they try to keep concealed as well as what they say or do openly. So, it would make no difference at all, if the hypocrites tried to conceal their infidelity from the Muslims, or the other group, not to disclose the verses of the Torah which speak of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. For, Allah Himself has, on different occasions, informed the Muslims in the Holy Qur'ān as to the hypocrisy of certain Jews and as to the testimony of the Torah also.

Verse 77 deals with the educated ones among the Jews, while Verse 78 speaks of those who were unlettered. These men had no knowledge of the Torah, and were even deficient in their understanding. Then, the Jewish scholars did not give them correct or proper information about their religion. No wonder, their minds were stuffed only with baseless superstitions which they found very pleasant and flattering.

Since the dishonesty of their scholars was the real cause of their superstitiousness, the crime of the former was greater than that of the latter. So, Verse 79 turns to the Jewish scholars. They were greedy and self-seeking, and in order to please the people for receiving money and respect from them, they used to misrepresent divine injunctions, going so far as to change the words of the Torah or distort the sense, pretending all the while that this was just what Allah had said or meant. The Verse 79 announces a grievous punishment for these two sins - distorting the Word of Allah and earning money by doing so.

A doctrinal point

Verse 78 says that the illiterate Jews follow their **زَنَنْ** : *Zann*, that is to say, their fancies or conjectures. Some people do not pay any attention to the context in which the word has been used here, and

come to the erroneous conclusion that it is not legitimate to accept or follow any view or injunction based on *Zann*, which they always translate as "a fanciful supposition." This, no doubt, is one of the lexical meanings of the word, but only one. Let us explain that the Holy Qur'an uses the word *Zann* in three ways:-

(1) To signify perfect certitude - "Those who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord" (2:46). (2) To signify the greatest likelihood - "And he said to him whom he thought was the more likely of the two to be released from the prison" (12:42). (3) To signify a mere fanciful supposition - as in the present verse. The *Zann* which the Holy Qur'an prohibits us to follow is that of the third kind. This verse condemns the Jews for having followed this kind of *Zann* which consists in a fanciful opinion that is not supported by a respectable argument or goes against a valid one. On the contrary, it is necessary to follow the *Zann* of the first two kinds. When certain *aḥādīth* or certain arguments and conclusions in the *Shari'ah* are described as resting on *Zann*, it is done according to the second signification of the word. One cannot avoid this kind of *Zann* in any sphere of life, and the *Shari'ah* requires us to accept and follow it. Certain verses of the Holy Qur'an, of course, condemn those who follow their *Zann*, but to apply this condemnation to all the possible cases, and to use such verses for rejecting all the legitimate arguments and injunctions of the *Shari'ah* based on *Zann* is to betray one's ignorance of the Holy Qur'an.

Verse 80

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

And they say, "The fire shall not touch us but for a few days." Say, "Have you taken a pledge from Allah and Allah will not go against His promise? Or, do you say about Allah what you do not know?" (Verse 80)

The claim of the Jews that they would not be sent to Hell for their sins, or, if at all, only for a few days, has been interpreted by the Commentators in different ways. One of them is as follows:-

The principle is common to all the Shari'ahs that if a believer commits sins, he will receive a punishment in Hell for some time and in accordance with the degree and nature of his sins, but as he possesses 'Imān (faith), he will not be assigned to Hell for ever, and will be released after having served his term. Now, the argument on which the assertion of the Jews was based was that since the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had not, in their view, been abrogated, they were true believers (*Mumins*), and had not turned into infidels (*Kāfirs*) by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Isā (Jesus عليه السلام) and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ; hence - so the argument ran - if they were sent to Hell in punishment of some sin, they would again be taken out after a few days. This false assertion is, thus based on another false assertion. The Torah never declares that the Shari'ah of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is meant to last for ever. To claim perpetuity for it is an unfounded and false assertion, and hence the Jews who made such a claim and denied the prophethood of Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام and of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, must on account of this denial be held to be infidels and disbelievers (*Kāfirs*). And no Book of Allah holds out to the infidels the promise that they would be released from Hell after a while. The present verse refers to such a promise as the "pledge" of Allah. Since Allah has never made such a promise, it goes to show that the Jews were making a baseless claim.

Verses 81 - 82

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَاطِبَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝

Why not? Those who commit evil and are besieged by their sin, those are people of the Fire - there they shall remain for ever. And those who believe, and do good deeds, such are people of Paradise - there they shall remain for ever. (Verses 81 - 82)

Having refuted the claim of the Jews as baseless, the Holy Qur'an lays down the divine law in this regard. Those who commit evil deeds knowingly and deliberately so that evil takes hold of them completely,

leaving no trace of goodness - such men shall go to the Hell, and live there for ever, without any intermission or release. But those who believe in Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ - whose *Shari'ah* has now abrogated all the earlier *Shari'ahs* and who do good deeds in conformity with the Islamic *Shari'ah*, - it is these men who shall go to Paradise, and will live there for ever.

Let us explain how evil can take hold of a man so completely that no trace of goodness is left. This kind of thing happens only to infidels (*Kāfirs*), and not to Muslims, even when they are sinners. For, no good deed on the part of an infidel is acceptable to Allah on account of his infidelity; even the good deeds he has done before his apostasy and infidelity are lost, and rendered null and void. That is why on the Day of Judgment, infidels will have to show nothing but evil, in punishment of which they shall live in Hell for ever. On the contrary, men of faith will, to begin with, have the greatest and highest good deed to their credit - namely, faith (*Imān*) itself. Then, their secondary good deeds too are recorded in their account. So, they cannot be devoid of all goodness, and evil cannot be said to have taken hold of them completely.

In short, the infidel, according to this divine law, must always live in Hell. Since Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) was not the last prophet, but was followed by two other prophets, Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus عليه السلام) and Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ, the Jews turned into infidels by denying these two prophets. So, in accordance with this law, they too will be assigned to Hell for ever like other infidels, and their claim that they would be released from Hell after few days can now be seen to be totally false and baseless.

Verse 83

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ
إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ
حُسْنًا ۚ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ۝

And when We made the children of Israel take a pledge:

"You shall not worship anyone but Allah; and to parents you shall be good, and to near of kin and to orphans and the needy. And say to the people what is good, and be steadfast in *Salāh*, and pay *Zakāh*." Then, you went back (on your word), all but a few among you, and you are used to turning away. (Verse 83)

This verse speaks of the pledge which Allah had made the Israelites take, and the few people it refers to as having been true to the pledge were those who acted upon the *Shari'ah* of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) as long as it was in force, and when it was abrogated, followed the *Shari'ah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم

Injunctions and related considerations

(1) This verse brings out the basic elements common to Islam and all the earlier *Shari'ahs*: *Tauhid* (the doctrine of Unity or Oneness); service to one's parents, relations, orphans and the needy; being gentle in speaking to all human beings; *Salāh* and *Zakāh*.

(2) The verse asks us to adopt a gentle tone and an open-hearted manner in speaking to others, whether they are good or evil, pious or impious, orthodox or aberrant, followers of *Sunnah* or adherents to partitive innovations in it. In religious matter, however, one should not try to hide the truth for the sake of pleasing people or of winning their approval. The Holy Qur'ān tells us that when Allah sent Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn (Moses and Aaron عليهم السلام) to the Pharaoh, He instructed them to use gentle and soft words (20:42). None of us who addresses another today can be superior to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, nor can the man addressed be viler than the Pharaoh.

Talha ibn 'Umar recounts that once he said to the great master of the Sciences of Exegesis and *Ḥadīth*, 'Atā', "One can see around you people who are not quite orthodox in their beliefs. As for me, I am rather short-tempered. If such people come to me, I deal with them harshly." 'Atā' replied, "Do not behave like this," and, reciting the present verse, he added, "Allah has commanded us to speak to people politely. When Jews and Christians all are to be treated like this, would this commandment not apply to a Muslim, no matter what kind of a man he is?" (Qurtubī)

Verse 84

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تَخْرِجُونَ
أَنفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ٥

And when We made you take a pledge: "You shall not shed one another's blood, and you shall not drive out one another from your homes." Then you agreed being yourselves the witness. (Verse 84)

This verse is a supplement to the previous verse, and speaks of the other articles of the pledge taken by the Israelites. They had agreed not to kill one another by engaging themselves in an internecine war, and also not to send their men into exile - that is to say, not to harass a man so as to force him to migrate.

They had willingly taken this pledge. Now, it may sometimes happen that one does not express one's willingness in so many words, but the manner of his speech suggests it. The agreement of the Israelites was not of this order, but as clear and explicit as the statement of a witness usually is.

Verse 85

ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ
مِّن دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِنْ يَأْتِوكُمْ أُسْرَى
تُفْدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ
الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ
إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَى أَشَدِّ
الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ٦

Yet, here you are, killing one another, and driving a group of your own out of their homes, supporting each other against them in sin and aggression -- and if they came to you as prisoners, you would ransom them, though their very expulsion was unlawful for you! Do you, then, believe in some part of the Book, and disbelieve in some other? So, what can be the recompense of those among you who do that, except disgrace in

present life? And, on Doomsday, they shall be turned to the most severe punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do. (Verse 85)

This verse recounts how the Israelites broke the pledge they had willingly made. Allah had laid down three special injunctions for the Israelites: (1) They should not kill one another in an internecine war. (2) They should not force their own people into exile. (3) If they found a man from amongst them a prisoner of war, they should pay a ransom, and get him released. The Israelites disregarded the first two injunctions, and acted upon the third alone which they supposed easier to be carried out.

It happened like this. There lived in Madīnah two tribes, the *Aws* and the *Khazraj*, who were hostile to each other, and would often go to war. In the environs of Madīnah, there also lived two tribes of the Jews, the Banī Qurayzah and the Banī Nadīr. The former had friendly relations with the *Aws*, and the latter with the *Khazraj*. When the *Aws* and the *Khazraj* went to war against each other, the two tribes of the Jews also took part in the battle, each on the side of its own friends. In these battles, many Jews lost their lives or were rendered homeless as much as the non-Jews. In other words, the Jews of the Banī Qurayzah tribe had a share in the slaughter and exile of the Jews of the Banī Nadīr tribe, and vice versa. However, when some of the Jews became prisoners of war, each of the two Jewish groups would persuade their respective friends among the non-Jews to accept a ransom and to release the prisoners. When they were asked why they showed such a solicitude for the prisoners, they would say that it was obligatory for them to get prisoners released. But when someone objected to their helping the non-Jews in slaughtering the Jews, they used to reply that it would be a real disgrace if they did not go to the aid of their friends, even if they were not Jews.

So, the present verse exposes their duplicity and their perversity. The Holy Qur'ān indicts their behaviour as "sin and aggression," and this suggests that the Israelites were infringing on two kinds of rights -- the right of Allah, by disobeying Him; and the right of His creatures, by inflicting pain and loss on them.

The verse proceeds to reprimand them for accepting certain

injunctions laid down in the Torah, while rejecting others, and following their own whims in both the cases. At the end, this long verse announces the grave punishment for such misdeeds the Israelites will have to bear in this world as well as in the other.

Let it be clearly understood that the Jews referred to in this verse had already become infidels (*Kāfirs*) by refusing to accept and affirm the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ. But instead of referring to this aspect of their infidelity, the verse points out another aspect. It reprimands them for having faith (*ʿĪmān*) only in some part of the Book (Torah) and not having faith in some other. If we take the words of the present verse literally, it means that the Jews had become infidels by not having faith in some parts (that is to say, some injunctions) of the Torah. For, a Divine Book has to be accepted as a whole; to reject a part is to reject the whole, and clearly amounts to disbelief and infidelity (*Kufr*). But if we interpret the present verse in a different way, and take it to be reprimanding the Jews for not acting upon certain injunctions, then a question would arise here: How is it that the verse delineates their infringement of certain commandments as *Kufr* or infidelity, although a believer cannot be considered an infidel so long as he accepts, at least in principle, the distinctions between the *Ḥalāl* (lawful) and the *Ḥarām* (unlawful) exactly as laid down by the *Shariʿah*? The answer to the question is that when a sin is very grave, the idiom of the *Shariʿah* sometimes delineates it as *Kufr* (infidelity) in order to emphasize its gravity and its moral nature. This is also what the *ḥadīth* intends to do when it says: *مَنْ تَرَكَ الصَّلَاةَ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ*: "He who gave up the *Salāh* wilfully became an infidel."

This second interpretation does not, however, attenuate or modify the *Kufr* (infidelity) of the Jews of which they had already been guilty by denying the prophethood of Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ.

The verse announces that the Jews will have to bear a punishment not only in the other world, but in this world too - in the shape of humiliation and disgrace. It took place as it had been foretold. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, the Jews of the Bani Qurayzah tribe had to lose their lives or to undergo imprisonment, and those of the Bani Nadīr tribe were expelled for having broken the pact they had earlier made with the Muslims.

A doctrinal point

Verse 85 announces the "punishment" for Jews. One may very well ask here why the direst punishment should be reserved for the Jews, and not for atheists, for the Jews at least believe in Allah. The famous Commentator 'Ālūsī says in his "Rūh al-Ma'ānī" that every punishment meted out to the infidels will be "the direst" in the sense that it will have no end or limit. So, what the verse implies is not that the punishment given to the Jews will be more severe than the one given to all the other infidels, but that they will be given the kind of punishment which is "the direst" in the sense of having no end or limit. In other words, the verse suggests that the punishment given to the infidels will be more severe than the one given to Muslim sinners. But if there are going to be different degrees in the punishment meted out to different kinds of infidels, it does not in any way go against the implications of this verse. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 86

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَخَفُ عَنْهُمْ
الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ٥

Those are the ones who bought the worldly life at the cost of the Hereafter. So, punishment shall not be lightened for them, nor shall they be helped. (Verse 86)

This verse explains why the Jews will have to undergo such a severe punishment. They have been disobeying Allah in order to satisfy their desires and to enjoy worldly pleasures; they have also sacrificed for these things their salvation in the other world. Their sin being so great, Allah will not reduce or mollify their punishment, nor will He allow anyone to intercede on their behalf.

Verse 87

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ وَآتَيْنَا
عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِقْنَا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِقًا
تَقْتُلُونَ ٥

And, indeed, We gave Mūsā the Book, and after him We sent messengers, one following the other; and We gave clear signs to ʿĪsā, the son of Mariam (Jesus, the son of Mary), and supported him with the Holy Spirit. Then, how is it that every time a prophet came to you with what does not meet your desire, you grew arrogant? So, you falsified a group (of the messengers) and killed others. (Verse 87)

The Qurʾān again reminds the Israelites how Allah in His mercy forgave them their transgressions again and again, and provided them with all the means of guidance. First of all, He gave them a Divine Book, the Torah, through Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام); then, sent them a number of prophets; and, at the end of this line, sent down Sayyidnā ʿĪsā (Jesus عليه السلام) along with clear and irrefutable evidences of his prophethood, like the Evangel and miracles, and appointed the Archangel Jibrāʾīl (Gabriel عليه السلام) to give him support.

The Archangel Jibrāʾīl has often been called "Rūḥ al-Qudus" (the Holy Spirit) in the Noble Qurʾān and the *Ḥadīth*. For example, in Verse 16:102 - قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ - "Say: the Holy Spirit has brought it (the Noble Qurʾān) down;" or in a couplet of the poet and blessed Companion Ḥassān ibn Thābit, reported in the *Ḥadīth*:

وجبريل رسول الله فينا
وروح القدس ليس له كفاء

Jibrāʾīl, the messenger of Allah, comes to us;
he is the Holy Spirit, the incomparable."

Allah helped and supported Sayyidnā ʿĪsā عليه السلام through Jibrāʾīl in several ways. (1) He was conceived through the breath of the Archangel. (2) Jibrāʾīl عليه السلام protected him against being touched by Satan at the time of this birth. (3) The Archangel always accompanied him in order to defend him against the hostility of the Jews. (4) It was through him that Sayyidnā ʿĪsā عليه السلام was raised to the heavens.

In spite of all these divine favours, the Jews persisted in their rebellion. They were so stubborn in the worship of their desires, that whenever the prophets brought to them certain divine injunctions which did not please them, the Jews would deny the prophets -- they

denied even Sayyidnā 'Isā --, or would kill them outright -- for example, they dealt in this vile manner with Sayyidnā Zakariyyā (Zachariah) and Sayyidnā Yāhya (John the Baptist) عليهم السلام .

Verse 88

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا
يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝

And they said, "Our hearts are veiled." Rather, Allah has cast damnation upon them for their disbelief. So, they believe just a little. (Verse 88)

The Jews used to say sarcastically that their hearts were "veiled", by which they meant that their hearts were so well protected against Islam that it could never touch them. This was their way of congratulating themselves on being staunch in their belief. The Holy Qur'an points out that this is not the firmness of faith, but a damnation, for they deny Islam which now is the true religion, and stick to a religion which has been abrogated. They, consequently, possess only "a little" faith (*Īmān*). Since a little faith is not acceptable, they turn out to be infidels.

The little faith" which they possessed pertained to the doctrines which are common to Islām and Judaism - for example, belief in Allah, or belief in the Day of Judgment. But they did not accept Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a prophet, and the Holy Qur'an as the Word of Allah. So, their faith was not complete.

If the Verse describes 'the little faith' as *Īmān*, it does so only in the lexical sense, for *Īmān* signifies total certitude, even if it pertains to certain things, and not to others. But from the point of view of the *Shari'ah*, such a partial faith cannot be described as *Īmān*. The *Shari'ah* would accept as valid only that *Īmān* which affirms with certitude each and everything that the *Shari'ah* requires one to affirm.

Verse 89

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا
مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ

مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ٥

And when there came to them a Book from Allah, which confirms what was with them, while earlier, they used to seek help against those who disbelieved, yet when there came to them that they did identify, they denied it. So the curse of Allah is upon the disbelievers. (Verse 89)

The Torah had in several places foretold the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. In fact, the Jews themselves used to tell the Arabs that a new prophet and a new Divine Book was soon to come. But when the Holy Qur'an came down from Allah, and even when they had recognized its authenticity, the Jews denied it out of sheer spite.

The verse says that the Holy Qur'an confirms the Torah - it means that the Holy Qur'an is a concrete evidence of the truth of the prophecies made in the Torah with regard to the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the Holy Qur'an. One who believes in the Torah cannot justifiably deny the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet ﷺ, for such a denial would involve a denial of the Torah itself.

Knowledge is not enough for 'Imān

One may want to know why the Holy Qur'an calls the Jews *Kāfirin* (infidels), when they did recognize the truth as truth, which should qualify them to be called "believers." Let us explain that 'Imān (faith) does not merely mean "knowing the truth", but really signifies "accepting the truth and affirming it deed-wise." Otherwise, Satan too will have to be called a believer, for he knows fully well what the truth is. In fact, this knowledge of the truth on the part of Satan intensifies the gravity of his *Kufr* (infidelity) all the more.

However, the next verse attributes the infidelity of the Jews to their malice.

Verse 90

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاءٌ وَ
بَعْضٌ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ٥

Vile is that for which they have sold out their selves: that they should deny what Allah has revealed, grudging that Allah should send down some of His bounty to whomsoever He wills from among His servants. So, they came out with wrath upon wrath. And for unbelievers there is humiliating punishment. (Verse 90)

Prophethood cannot be earned through one's own efforts or one's own merit; it is a special grace which Allah bestows on whomsoever He likes. But the Jews were so envious and malicious that they denied the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'ān out of sheer spite. In doing so, they were questioning the will of Allah Himself. Thus, they earned divine wrath in two ways - firstly, for denying a true prophet; and secondly, for their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'ān says that the Jews will have to undergo a punishment which would involve not only pain, but also disgrace and abasement. The latter condition has been added to suggest that this kind of punishment is peculiar to the infidels, and is not meant for a true Muslim at all, for a Muslim, no matter how great his sins are, will be punished for the purpose of being purified, not for being disgraced.

The next verse reports what the Jews used to say with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, which clearly shows their envy and malice as well as their infidelity (*Kufr*).

Verse 91

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ
عَلَيْنَا وَنَكْفُرُ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ قُلْ
فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ٥

And when it is said to them, "Believe in what Allah has revealed," they say, "We believe in what has been revealed to us" -- and they deny what is beyond, whereas that is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say, "Why then have you been slaying the prophets of Allah earlier, if you were believers?" (Verse 91)

The Jews flatly refused to believe in any Book of Allah -- like the Evangel or the Holy Qur'an - except in the Torah. This denial is a clear evidence of their infidelity (*Kufr*). Moreover, they also used to add that they believe in the Torah, for it had been sent down to them. This comes to mean that they denied the other Books just because they had not been sent down to them. Such an argument betrays their envy and malice.

The Holy Qur'an refutes their argument in three ways:-

(1) When the truth and authenticity of the other Books has been established on the basis of irrefutable arguments, what does, then, this denial mean? If they had any doubts as to the arguments on the basis of which authenticity was being claimed for these Books, they could very well have voiced this doubt, and satisfied themselves on this point. But why this flat refusal to believe?

(2) The other Books, like the Holy Qur'an, confirm the Torah. If one denies them, one at the same time denies the Torah itself.

(3) To slay a prophet is tantamount to infidelity (*Kufr*), according to all the Divine Books. Moreover, the prophets whom the Jews had killed were themselves Israelites, and their teachings, were based on the injunctions of the Torah. But the Jews not only killed these prophets, but also accepted the killers as their chiefs. This is a direct denial of the Torah, and falsifies their claim that they believe in the Torah.

In short, nothing that the Jews say or do is acceptable and valid from any possible point of view.

The next verses proceed to refute the Jews on several other counts.

Verse 92

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِن بَعْدِهِ
وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ۝

And certainly Moses came to you with clear signs, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter -- and you were transgressors. (Verse 92)

The "clear signs" mentioned in the verse refers to the miracles which had manifested themselves even before the Torah was given to Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) -- for example, his staff that turned into a snake, the palm of his hand which shone brightly, the splitting of the sea to make a path for the Israelites, etc. These miracles were meant to affirm the Oneness of Allah and His omnipotence, and to provide an evidence for the prophethood of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام.

In refutation of the Jews, the verse points out that although they lay a claim to *'Imān* (faith), yet have been falling into the sin of *Shirk* (association), which involves a denial not only of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام but even of Allah Himself.

Although the Jews who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, did not themselves take part in the worship of the golden calf, yet they respected such of their forefathers as had done so, and took their side. So, for all practical purposes, they too were guilty of the same sin.

The verse also suggests that no wonder if these people, whose forefathers denied Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, should now be denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verse 93

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ
بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمَعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِم
الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ ٥

And when We took pledge from you, and raised high the (Mount of) *Tūr* above you: "Hold fast to what We have given you, and listen" -- they said, "We have heard and disobeyed." And, on account of their denial, they were soaked with the love of the calf in their hearts. Say: "Evil is that which your faith enjoins upon you, if you are believers." (Verse 93)

In refuting the claim of the Jews to be authentic and true believers, the Holy Qur'an again recounts an incident which it has

already referred to in Verse 63. When the Israelites succeeded, with the help of Allah, in escaping from Egypt and crossing the sea, they came upon a people who used to worship idols. They found this cult so attractive that they requested Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) to fabricate a visible and concrete god for them too. When he reprimanded them, they realized their error, and offered repentance. But repentance has many degrees. Since their repentance was not of a very high order, the darkness of their error did not altogether leave their hearts, but continued to grow, and finally manifested itself in the worship of the golden calf. As an act of penance, some of them had to be slain, and others, as some commentators report, were forgiven and not slain. Possibly the repentance of these latter was again of a low order. As for those who had not indulged in the worship of the calf, they did not hate the action of the worshippers of the calf as much as they should have. So, their hearts too carried a trace of the sin of association (*shirk*). So, either through the feebleness of their repentance or through a want of proper hatred for infidelity, their hearts became indolent in religious matters, so much so that when Allah asked them to take a pledge to follow the injunctions of the Torah steadfastly, Mount *Tūr* (Sinai) was suspended over their heads to threaten them.

This verse reports the Jews as having replied that they had heard the Command of Allah, but they would not obey, or would not be able to obey. It means that out of sheer fright they said (only with their tongues) that they had heard (that is to say, accepted) the Command of Allah. But there was no real consent in their hearts, and their posture and attitude was such as if they were saying that they would not or could not obey.

Having referred to such example of their perversity and rebellion, the Holy Qur'ān asks the Jews to have a look at themselves and also at their claim to genuine faith. Could a true faith ever inspire men to such deeds? If it is their brand of "faith" which leads them into such grave sins, then it cannot be a true faith. Hence their claim to be true believers is evidently false.

Verses 94 - 95

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ
النَّاسِ فَتَمَتُّوا الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ٥ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوهُ أَبَدًا
بِمَا قَدَّمْتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ٥

Say: "If the Last Abode near Allah is for you purely, short of all people, then make a wish for death, if you are true." But they will never wish for it because of what their hands have sent ahead. And Allah is all-aware of the unjust. (Verses 94 - 95)

The Jews used to claim that the blessings of the other world were specially reserved for them, and were not, meant for any other people. Certain other verses of the Holy Qur'an too refer to such a claim on the part of the Jews, and also of the Christians: قَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّ النَّارَ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَةً : "They say: The fire will not touch us but for a few days" (2:80), وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ : "And they say: No one will enter Paradise except he who is a Jew or Christian" (2:111), and اللَّهُ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ : "And the Jews and the Christians said: We are the sons of Allah and His close friends" (5:18). What they meant in making such a claim was that since their own faith was the true one, they must certainly attain salvation in the other world -- the repentant and the forgiven being admitted to Paradise from the very beginning, the sinners finding release from the fires of Hell after undergoing a punishment for a few days, and the obedient receiving a welcome like sons and beloved friends.

The use of certain improper expressions like "sons of Allah" notwithstanding, these claims are in themselves quite correct, provided that they pertain to people who follow a true and valid faith. But the Jews (and the Christians as well) were still following a faith which had been abrogated, and was thus no longer valid -- a fact which nullified their claim. So, the Holy Qur'an has refuted the claim again and again in different ways, and the present verse has adopted a special mode. The habitual method of settling a dispute is to have a discussion and let both the parties present their own arguments. Since the Jews knew they could not win, they fought shy of this normal way. So, the

Holy Qur'an suggests an abnormal method, which would not call for much knowledge or understanding, but only put a little strain on the tongue. The proposed trial consists in this -- if the Jews are so sure of the blessings of the other world being reserved for themselves, they should declare that they wish to die, and this declaration would establish them as being genuine in their faith; but if they refuse to accept the challenge, it would show that they were liars. The Holy Qur'an also predicts that they would never have the courage to go through the trial.

In view of their hostility to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, one could expect them to take up such a simple challenge very zealously. But they knew very well in their heart of hearts that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Muslims stood for the truth, while they themselves were the champions of falsehood, and were, in actual fact, infidels. So, they refused to go through the trial, for they were struck with awe, and feared that as soon as they had expressed the wish to die, death would come over them, and they would be sent to Hell. This recalcitrance is, thus, in itself an evidence of the truth of Islam.

Here we must note that the trial was proposed not for all the Jews of all the ages, but specially for those who were the contemporaries of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and who used to deny him out of sheer envy and malice, in spite of having recognized that he was a genuine prophet.

Nor should one raise the doubt here that they had perhaps accepted the challenge, and "wished" for death in their hearts, as the Holy Qur'an seems to ask. For one, the Holy Qur'an itself reports the prediction that they would never "wish for it." Secondly, if they could wish for death in their hearts, they must have declared it orally too, for their victory lay in just such a declaration, and this was a very easy way of refuting the Holy Prophet ﷺ. But they did not avail themselves of this opportunity.

Nor can one suppose that they did make an oral declaration, for the fact has not been reported, and thus has not come down to us. Such a supposition would be wrong, because the opponents of Islam have always outnumbered its adherents, and if such a thing had happened, they must have been trumpeting it aloud to show to the

world that the Jews had successfully passed the test proposed by the Holy Qur'an itself.

Verse 96

وَلَنَجْذَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَوةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا
يَوَدُّ أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحَّزِّجٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ
يُعَمَّرَ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝

And you shall surely find them, of men, the most avid for life -- even more than the polytheists. Of them, one would love to be aged a thousand years. But it will not remove him from punishment to be so aged. And Allah is watchful of what they do. (Verse 96)

This verse shows the basic weakness of the Jews which did not allow them to accept the challenge proposed in Verse 94, and thus exposes the hollowness of their claim to the blessings of the other world being reserved for them. The Holy Qur'an puts a special emphasis on the fact that the Jews loved physical life much more than did the Arab polytheists. Such an inclination should not have been surprising on the part of the latter, for, after all, they did not believe in the other world, and physical life was the be-all and end-all for them. But the Jews acknowledged the existence of the other world, and even had the illusion that they alone deserved its joys, and yet it was they who, above all others, wished to live in this world as long as possible. This very desire shows how baseless their pretention was, and how they themselves knew that they would have to face the fires of Hell in the other world, and that physical life was, as long as it lasted, a kind of protection against their final fate.

Verse 97 - 98

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلْجَبْرِئِلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ
مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۝ مَنْ كَانَ
عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَجِبْرِئِلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ
لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ۝

Say, whoever be an enemy to Jibrā'il (Gabriel) -- it is he who has brought it down upon your heart by the permission of Allah, confirming what has been before it, and a guidance and good tidings to the believers. Whoever be an enemy to Allah, His angels, and His messengers, and to Jibrā'il and Mikā'il, surely Allah is enemy to the disbelievers. (Verses 97 - 98)

The perversity of the Jews was very fertile, and gave them ever-new excuses for denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When they learnt that it was Archangel Jibrā'il (Gabriel عليه السلام) who brought the Glorious Qur'an to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they said that the Archangel was their enemy, as it was through him that rigorous commandments or catastrophic punishments had always descended on them, and that for this reason they would not accept a Book which had been revealed through his agency. They also added that they could have accepted the Holy Qur'an, if the Archangel Mikā'il (Michael عليه السلام) had brought it down, for he is connected with rain and with divine mercy.

In refuting this argument, the Holy Qur'an points out that Jibrā'il عليه السلام is only a messenger, and has, acting only as a messenger, brought down the Holy Qur'an under a divine command to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, why should the Jews be so particular about the messenger, and not look at the Book itself? As for the Book, it confirms the earlier Books of Allah, provides guidance to men, and gives good tidings to the believers. This being what the Divine Books are meant for, the Holy Qur'an is evidently enough a Divine Book, and must, as such be obeyed. To deny it on account of one's hostility to Jibrā'il عليه السلام is sheer stupidity or outright perversity. Now, as for the attitude of the Jews towards Jibrā'il عليه السلام, the Holy Qur'an declares that to be hostile to the angels (including Jibrā'il and Mikā'il عليه السلام) or to the prophets is tantamount to being hostile to Allah Himself. Verse 98 puts down the enemies of angels and prophets as infidels (*Kāfirin*) in saying that Allah is the enemy of the infidels. In other words, those who deny or oppose the angels and the prophets will have their due punishment in the other world.

Maulana Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, in his "Bayān al-Qur'an", warned against the possibility of very grave error that may arise with regard to the statement in Verse 97 that the Archangel Jibrā'il (Gabriel عليه السلام) has "brought down the Book on the heart" of the

Holy Prophet ﷺ. The error would lie in drawing from this phrase the conclusion that Allah has not revealed the words of the Holy Qur'an but only the meanings. Such a supposition is quite baseless, because many verses of the Holy Qur'an itself mention the Arabic language as the vehicle of revelation in the case of this particular Book of Allah. That should leave no room for any doubt. Moreover, the "heart" perceives words as much as it does meanings; in fact, the perceiving agent is the "heart", while the ears etc. are only its instruments. Specially, in the state of revelation, the external organs of the senses become dormant, and the heart receives even the words directly without the intervention of the ears. Although we cannot understand the nature of revelation properly, yet, choosing a mundane analogy, one can say that while dreaming in our sleep we do hear words and remember them afterwards, in spite of our external sense of hearing having been suspended while we dreamt. This example should make it easy to see that the revelation of meanings to the heart does in no way preclude the revelation of words as well. Anyhow, it is a sin - and an intellectual dishonesty - to rely on one's own conjectures in defiance of a clear and definite statement in the Holy Qur'an.

Verse 99

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ ٥

And certainly We have revealed to you clear signs. And no one denies them except the sinful. (Verse 99)

In denying the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the Jews used to say that no clear evidence or sign of his prophethood had been revealed to him such as they could recognize and accept. In reply to this the Holy Qur'an says that Allah has revealed a number of very clear signs and evidences of his prophethood which even they know and understand very well. So, their denial is not based on a lack of recognition or knowledge, but on their habitual disobedience, for, as a general rule, no one denies such evidence except those who are wilful and stubborn in their disobedience.

Verse 100

أَوْ كَلِمًا عَلَيْهِمْ عَهْدًا نَبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ٥

Would it always be that every time they enter into a

**pact, a group from among them should throw it aside?
In fact, most of them do not believe. (Verse 100)**

Allah had, as the Torah itself reports, made the Jews take the pledge that they would have faith in the Holy Prophet ﷺ when he appeared. On being reminded of it, the Jews flatly denied even having taken such a pledge. Commenting on this effrontery, the Holy Qur'an says that this is not the only instance of such a conduct on their part, for the Jews have, in fact, never fulfilled even those pledges which they acknowledge, and one group or another from among them has always been breaking the compacts they have entered into, specially with regard to religious matters. It can even be said that most of those who have been guilty of such gross violations, did not at all believe in the compacts which they made with Allah. Going against a pledge is only a sin and transgression, but having no faith in the pledge which one gives to Allah is outright infidelity.

The Holy Qur'an specifically speaks of one group or another breaking the pledge, and not of all the Jews. For there were some among them who did fulfil the pledges, so much so that many Jews finally accepted Sayyidnā Muḥammad ﷺ as a true prophet, and joined the ranks of the Muslims.

Verse 101

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ الْكِتَابَ أَكْثَبَ اللَّهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَانَتْهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ٥

**And when came to them a messenger from Allah, confirming what was already with them, some from among the people of the Book threw away the Book of Allah behind their backs, as if they did not know.
(Verse 101)**

The previous verse had told us how the breaking of pledges and disobedience had become a regular habit with the Jews. The present verse gives us the latest instance, which is the most relevant to the context.

The Torah had already given the Jews the good tidings of the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When he actually came with all signs which the Torah had indicated, thus confirming the Sacred Book of the

Jews, a large number of them refused to accept him as a prophet. In doing this, they were, in fact, denying the Torah itself, and behaving as if they know nothing of the prophecy, or even the Torah being a Book of Allah. Thus, they were being guilty of infidelity (*Kufr*) even in terms of the Torah itself.

Verses 102 - 103

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكٍ سُلَيْمَنَ وَمَا كَفَرَ
 سُلَيْمَنُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا
 أُنْزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ
 أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا
 مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ
 إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا
 لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ
 أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ
 عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ۝

And they followed what the devils used to recite in the reign of Sulaymān (Solomon) -- it was not Sulaymān who became an infidel, but the devils did become infidels, teaching people magic, and what had been sent down to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Babylon. And these two did not teach anyone without having said, "We are nothing but a trial, so do not go infidel." Then, they used to learn from them that with which they could separate man from his wife. But they were not to bring harm through it to anyone, without the will of Allah. And they used to learn what harmed them and did no good to them. And they certainly knew that he who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. And, indeed, vile is the thing for which they sold themselves away. Only if they knew! And had they accepted the faith, and been God-fearing, the reward from Allah would have always been far better. Only if they knew! (Verses 102 - 103)

In connection with these two verses, some commentators have reported certain Judaic traditions, which have given rise to a number of doubts, especially in the minds of Muslims with a Western orientation. Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has provided very simple and clear solutions to these exegetical problems, and we shall reproduce them here:-

(1) The Jews were impertinent and senseless enough to attribute magic and sorcery to a prophet -- namely, Sayyidnā Sulaymān (Solomon عليه السلام). So, in saying that they used to learn the black arts of the devils (*Shayātīn*), the Holy Qur'ān takes care to deny, as a parenthesis, such a vile allegation against Sayyidna Sulaymān عليه السلام.

(2) These verses condemn the Jews for indulging in black magic. In connection with the verses, some commentators have reported a long and well-known story about a woman called *Zuhrah*, which is not based on any authentic Islamic tradition. Those scholars who have found the story to be infringing the regulations of the Shari'ah, have rejected it as mere fiction; but those who believe that it can be interpreted so as to come in line with the Shari'ah, have not dismissed it totally. For the moment we are not concerned with the question whether the story is true or false. But what we would like to insist upon is the fact that a proper understanding does in no way depend on this story.

(3) The Jews knew very well that their indulgence in black magic was not only a sin, but also involved infidelity (*Kufr*). They could also see that such activities would do them no good even in this world, for their sorcery could not harm anyone except when Allah willed it so. Thus their practice went against their knowledge, and they made no use of their understanding to see this discrepancy. That is why the Holy Qur'ān, to begin with, states that they "knew", and then goes on to negate this 'knowledge' by saying, "Only if they knew!" For, if one does neither act upon what one knows nor tries to understand it properly, one's knowledge is no better than ignorance.

(4) There was a time when black magic had grown very popular in the world, particularly in Babylon. Seeing its astonishing efficacy, ignorant people began to confuse its effects with the miracles of prophets, and to suppose that the two were identical in nature. Some

even looked upon magicians as being holy men, and worthy of being obeyed; still others actually started learning and practising black magic as if it were a good deed bearing a divine sanction.²⁵

In short, this extraordinary veneration for magic and magicians had become a potent source of misguidance. In order to eradicate this misunderstanding, Allah sent down to Babylon two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, for informing the people as to the true nature of magic and as to its different forms, so that they should distinguish it from the miracles of prophets, and keep away from obeying magicians and practising magic themselves. Just as the prophethood of prophets is divinely confirmed through miracles, signs and rational or other arguments, in the same way the angelical nature of Hārūt and Mārūt was confirmed on the basis of different signs and arguments, so that people should listen attentively to them and follow their guidance.

This particular function was not assigned to the prophets for two reasons. Firstly, the need of the hour was to establish a distinction between the prophets and the magicians, and, the prophets being in a way a party to the dispute, it was proper that a third party should be the arbitrator. Secondly, the necessary distinction between the two could not, in a normal course, be defined without citing and reporting the verbal formulas employed in magic. Merely to report heretical speech is not in itself a heresy - this is a logical and rational principle, and the Shari'ah too accepts it. So, the prophets could have been allowed to cite these formulas; but, they being a manifestation of divine guidance, Allah did not ask them to perform such a function, and chose two angels for the purpose. For, Allah's commandments are of two kinds -- those pertaining to *Takwīn* (creation and the cosmic order), and those pertaining to *Tashrī'* (legislation) -, and it is quite possible that sometimes the two may not seem to accord with each other. The order of creation is made up of good and evil both, and it is the angels through whom divine commandments are enforced in this sphere. So, the angels are made to do things which, in the perspective

25. Just as there has been a sudden outburst of enthusiasm for the occult sciences in the West since the middle of the sixties in this century, particularly in America where even the universities have been inundated by it.

of the cosmic order, always lead to general good, but which, in so far as they necessarily involve some kind of partial disorder, are seen to be evil -- for example, the growth and upkeep of a human tyrant, or of a harmful beast, each of which is right in the context of the order of creation, but wrong from the point of view of the order of legislation. On the other hand, the prophets are entrusted only with the functions of the legislative order, which are, in their general as well as particular applications, nothing but good.

Although, in view of the ultimate purpose, this reporting of the formulas of magic too was related to the legislative order, yet there was probability -- which even materialized -- that a reporting of such formulas could give an incentive to the practice of black magic. So, Allah preferred not to make the prophets even an indirect means of such reprehensible activities. All the same, the prophets too were made to serve the main purpose by announcing the basic regulations of the Shari'ah with regard to magic, though not the details pertaining to the minor rules derived from them, for that could have possibly given rise to temptation. We shall explain it through an analogy. The prophets have, for example, told us that it is forbidden to accept a bribe, and have also explained the nature of bribery, but have not given us the details as to how a bribe is given or taken, for a delineation of such minute details would have served only to teach men the different methods of giving or taking a bribe. Or, take an example from different branches of magic. If one utters a certain formula, one would, on getting up from the bed in the morning, find money under his pillow or in his pocket. The Shari'ah makes it quite clear that such a practice is not, in principle, legitimate, but does not specify what that formula is.

In short, the two angels came down to Babylon, and started the work assigned to them -- that is to say, they used to explain the basic principles of magic, its different forms and the specific formulas, and then used to dissuade the people from getting themselves involved in these activities or with the magicians. Their work was exactly like that of a scholar who, finding that illiterate people sometime fall into uttering heretical words or phrases on account of their ignorance, should collect in his speeches or writings all such phrases that have

gained currency, and inform them as to what they must carefully avoid.

Now, all sorts of people started coming to the angels for seeking information about the nature and the specific formulas of a magic lest ignorance should lead them into error, in the matter of doctrines or that of deeds. In order to provide the correct teaching on this subject and to protect the people from error, the angels were scrupulous enough to make it a point to warn them of possible dangers in giving them the information. They insisted on making it quite clear that in allowing them to provide this kind of information to the people in general, Allah intended to put His servants through a trial, for He would see who uses this knowledge for protecting his *Īmān* (faith) by recognizing evil and avoiding it, and who falls into misguidance by adopting evil that he has come to recognize as evil -- a choice which can easily lead one into *Kufr* (infidelity) in the matter of deeds or in that of doctrines. The angels repeatedly advised them to seek this dangerous information only with a good intent and to remain steadfast in this good intent, and not to misuse the knowledge so as to earn perpetual damnation.

The angels could not be more honest and forthright. So, they explained the basic principles of magic and even the subsidiary details to all those who were ready to take the pledge to remain steadfast in their faith. Of course, if anyone broke the pledge and fell into transgression or infidelity, it was his own business, and the angels could not be held responsible for it. Some were true to their promise, while many did not fulfil the pledge, and made their knowledge of magic a means of doing harm to people -- this in itself is sin and transgression, while some modes of magic actually involve infidelity (*Kufr*). Thus, through a misuse of their knowledge of magic, some turned into sinners and others into infidels.

Let us repeat that the angels had taught magic for the purpose of reforming the people and helping them to keep to the straight path, but those who misused this teaching did so out of their own perversity. An example would make the situation still more clear. Let us suppose that a man goes to a master of the Islamic sciences, who is an expert in the traditional branches of learning and in philosophy as well, and

who also acts upon his knowledge, and this man requests the master to teach him philosophy, ancient or modern, so that he may protect himself against the doubts raised by the philosophers with regard to Islamic doctrines, and may also be able to give a satisfactory reply to those who raise such doubts. Apprehending that he might turn out to be insincere, and might finally bring the knowledge of philosophy to the aid of false and anti-Islamic ideas, the master warns him against such an eventuality, and the man takes a pledge that he would not misuse his knowledge. Having satisfied himself, the master gives him a thorough training in philosophy. But the man, contrary to his promise, begins to accept the anti-Islamic and false theorizing of philosophers as the truth. Obviously, in such a case, the teacher can in no way be held responsible for the way the pupil behaves. Similarly, there can be no room for doubting the integrity of these two angels.

Although Allah Himself knows how things were, yet one can suppose that once the angels had done the work assigned to them, they must have been recalled to the Heavens. (*Bayān al-Qurʾān*)

What is Magic ? Definition and effects

Since the study of magic has been enjoying a weird currency in the Western countries since 1968, and has sometimes been accepted as a part of academic research, we had better consider the subject at some length from the Islamic point of view. According to the authoritative Arabic dictionary "*Al-Qāmūs*", the word *Sihr* (Magic) signifies an effect the cause of which is not apparent, whether the cause may actually lie in something which possesses a luminous quality (as the effect of certain phrases), or in things with an extra-sensory reality (as the effect produced by jinns and devils), or in the power of imagination (as the effect of hypnotism), or in things which are sensory yet hidden (as a magnet drawing to itself a piece of iron, when the magnet is concealed from the onlookers; or the effect of drugs, when they have been furtively administered; or the influence of stars and planets). The causes at work being numerous, the forms of magic too are numerous.

Magic and Charms

In everyday language, magic signifies those practices which

involve the co-operation of jinns and devils, or the exercise of the power of imagination, or the use of certain words or phrases. It is a rationally established proposition, accepted by ancient philosophers and by some of the modern ones as well, and equally confirmed by observation and experiment, that words and phrases in themselves possess a certain efficacy, and that when certain letters, words or phrases are recited or written down for a specified number of times, they produce certain specific results. Similar results are obtained by employing human hair or nails or the clothes worn by the person concerned, etc. - a practice which is usually described as the preparation of "Charms". All such things are commonly known as magic.

***Sihr* or Magic: The Islamic view**

But in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Sihr* (magic) refers to all those usual happenings which have been brought about with the active help of the devils (*Shayātīn*), won over through certain practices likely to please them. There are several ways of pleasing the devils. Sometimes one sings the praises of the devils, and sometimes recites formulas of a heretical nature which deny Allah or associate others with Him. The worship of stars and planets too gladdens their heart, as do certain evil deeds - for example, preparing a charm with the blood of a person killed unlawfully, or refusing to adopt the prescribed modes of purifying one's body, or living constantly and deliberately in a state of uncleanness and impurity. Just as the aid of the angels can be won only through those modes of speech and action which they like (for example, remembrance of Allah, fear of Him and obedience to His commandments, cleanliness and purity, avoidance of all kinds of dirtiness, physical or otherwise, and good deeds in general), similarly the co-operation of the devils can be obtained through those modes of speech and action which are pleasant to them. That is why only those are successful in the practice of black magic who are habitually unclean and impure, avoid required purification and remembrance of Allah, and are given to all kinds of evil deeds - for example, it is usually during the period of menstruation that women become effective in the practice of black magic. So much for black magic or sorcery in the exact sense of the term. As for sleights of hand, mesmerism, hypnotism, or the tricks of

jugglers, they are sometimes described as magic only by an extension of the meaning of the word, or metaphorically. (Rūh al-Ma'ānī)

Kinds of Magic

In his "*Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*", Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī says that there are several kinds of magic. Firstly, there are sleights of hand, like those of jugglers, which deceive the eyes of the onlookers, but have no further substance. Then, there are ways of influencing the imagination of others through the concentration of one's own powers of thought so that they begin to see or feel things which do not really exist as happens in mesmerism or hypnotism. Such a result is sometimes obtained with the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*) too. In speaking of the magicians of the Pharaoh, the Holy Qur'ān says: سَحَرُوا أَعْيُنَ النَّاسِ : "They cast a spell on the eyes of the people" (7:116). Or, in another place: يَحْيَىٰ : "Through their magic Moses came to think that they (ropes turned into serpents) were running about" (20:66). Obviously, this piece of magic had to do with influencing of the imagination. The second of these verses employs a verb which has the same root as the noun *Khayāl* (thought), and hence clearly states that the ropes and the wands cast down by the magicians had neither turned serpents nor made any movement, but the imagination of Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) had been affected so as to see them running about in the shape of serpents. The Holy Qur'ān also indicates the other way of influencing men's imaginations which involves the help of the devils (*Shayātīn*):

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ

Shall I tell you on whom the devils descend? They descend on all those who are slanderers and sinners." (26:222)

Still another kind of magic is that which can change the very nature of a thing - for example, turning a man into a beast or into a stone. Scholars like Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī and Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ deny that magic can totally change the nature of a thing, but confine the efficacy of magic only to influencing the imagination and to deceiving the eyes of the onlookers. This is also what the *Mu'tazilah* thought of the matter. But most of the scholars hold that neither the Shari'ah nor any rational argument forbids the possibility of

trans-substantiation or the changing of one thing into another, like a living body turning into a stone. As for the well-known principle of the classical philosophers that the change of the "essences" (*Haqā'iq*) is not possible, it concerns the "essences" of the three categories - the Impossible, the Possible and the Necessary --, for, rationally speaking, it just cannot be that something impossible should become possible, or that something possible should become impossible. And as to the Holy Qur'an putting down the magic of the Egyptian sorcerers as only an impact on the imagination, it does not necessarily mean that all the forms of magic should be no more than an influencing of the imagination. Moreover, certain scholars have seen an argument in favour of the possibility of trans-substantiation through magic in a saying of Ka'b al-Ahbār, reported by Imām Mālik in his *Muwatta'* on the authority of Qa'qa' ibn Hakīm: "Were it not for these phrases which I recite regularly, the Jews would have changed me into a donkey." "A donkey" is, no doubt, a usual metaphor for "a fool." But it is not proper to turn away, unnecessarily, from the literal meaning to a metaphorical one. So, the sentence means just what it says - that if the recitation of the phrases had not protected him, the Jewish sorcerers would have changed him into a donkey. The saying, thus, establishes two things. Firstly, it is possible to change a man into a donkey; secondly, the phrases he used to recite had the property of making the magic of the sorcerers lose its efficacy. On being asked what these phrases were, the scholar Ka'b al-Ahbār taught his listeners the following words of prayer:

اعوذ بالله العظيم الذى ليس بشئ اعظم منه وبكلمات الله التامات التى
لا يجاوزهن بر ولا فاجر وباسماء الله الحسنى كلها ما علمت منها وما لم
اعلم من شراً خلق وبره وذره . (اخرجه فى الموطأ باب التعوذ عند النوم)

"I seek the protection of Allah the Great, greater than whom there is none; and I seek the protection of the perfect words of Allah which no man, virtuous or wicked, can even transcend; and I seek the protection of all the Beautiful Names of Allah, those of them which I know and those which I do not know, from the evil of everything which Allah has created, to which

He has given existence, and which He has spread (over the earth or the universe)."

To sum up, all the three forms of magic are possible, and can manifest themselves in actual fact.

Miracles

Now, let us turn to another important aspect of the question. Through prophets and saints certain events come into manifestation which normally and habitually never happen, and are hence designated as *Kharq al-'Ādah* (contrary to the habitual). The Islamic term for the miracles of prophets is *Mu'jizāt*, and for those of saints, *Karāmat*. The effects produced by such miracles are in appearance sometimes similar to those produced by magic. This external resemblance leads some ignorant people to confuse the one with the other, and they begin to have a reverence for magicians which is totally out of place. So, one must understand the difference between the two clearly.²⁶

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26. **Editorial Note on معجز : *Mu'jizah* or Miracle:** For all the unusual events and unprecedented happenings the English language has but one word, 'Miracle' which makes it impossible for the reader in that language to mark the subtle difference in various forms of miracles. Briefly, therefore, the different forms of miracles with their distinct objections are explained here. It is hoped that this will help the readers have a clearer conception of *Mu'jizah*.

These terms are used in Arabic language to define and differentiate the unprecedented happenings and here each of them is explained, so as to clearly differentiate them. Qualitatively, there is, apparently no difference in all of them.

Mu'jizah is the unusual event which occurs at the hands of a prophet. It is purely an act of Allah. A prophet's own volition has no part in the working of it. For those who witness a *Mu'jizah* it is compulsory to believe in it.

Karāmah (كرامة) -- another mode of unusual happenings -- is also an act of Allah; it appears at the hands of a Man of Allah (رَسُولُ اللَّهِ). The basic difference in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* is that one who performs *Mu'jizah*, addresses himself as a prophet, a Man of Allah has no such claim. In both *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah* the usual cause and effect link is absent. Things happen but without any cause; and there is usually a total transformation of the nature and behaviour of objects in *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. What is required is a generalized belief in them. Allah chooses whoever He wills for *Mu'jizah* and *Karāmah*. No degree of stringent discipline can give the power to make the unusual happen.

The Difference between Miracle and Magic

The miracles of prophets and saints are different from magic, firstly, in their respective natures, and, secondly, with regard to the signs and indications attendant upon each. As for the difference in their natures, it lies in the fact that the results produced through magic depend on the law of causality as much as do the ordinary and usual events in the physical world, the only distinction being that the causes are in the latter case quite clear or easily observable, while in the former they are different for a common man to detect. Where the causes are evident, the effects are immediately referred back to them, and the events thus produced are not considered to be astonishing, but where the causes are hidden or obscure, the events produced by them arouse wonder and amazement, and those who are ignorant of the causes readily come to believe that the things have happened in contravention of the habitual laws of the physical universe.²⁷ What these people do not realize is that such happenings are as much due to certain causes as the habitual events - the cause in the case of extraordinary happenings often being the activity of a jinn or a devil (*Shayṭān*). For example, a letter suddenly falls in front of a man, and on reading it he finds that the letter has been written just this day and is coming from a distance of ten thousand miles. Now, the onlookers would call it a "supernatural" event, for they do not know that Allah has given the power of doing such things to jinns and devils. Once one

Continued

Irhaṣ (إرہاص) is also a kind of *Karāmah*. It heralds the coming of a prophet. It usually occurs at the hands of the one who is closely related to the prophet: the unprecedented happenings in the life of Mariam, mother of prophet 'Isā عليه السلام or the various unusual events that began occurring to and around Aminah -- the blessed mother of our Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ; for instance, she had no pangs of birth, towards the close of the birth period she used to hear stranger voices greeting her, although she saw no one. It is compulsory to believe in such events of *Irhaṣ* as have been mentioned in the Qur'ān and believe in a general manner, that *Irhaṣ* is usually associated with the coming of a prophet.

27. In the West, they describe such events as being "supernatural", although the Latin word *Natura*, which is the equivalent of the Greek word *Phusis*, does, at least in its original sense, cover all that has been created, whether it lies in the domain studied by empirical science or beyond it.

comes to understand the means through which things of this nature take place, one would no longer see them as "supernatural", or even as being contrary to "habit". In short, all the results obtained through magical practices are, in fact, due to the operation of physical causes, but in the eyes of common people they acquire the illusory appearance of "supernatural" events, simply because the operative causes are hidden from them.

On the other hand, miracles happen directly under divine command without the intervention of physical causes. For example, the Holy Qur'ān tells us how the tyrant *Namrūd* (Nimrod) threw Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام) into a blazing fire, and how Allah commanded the fire to grow cold for him, but not so cold as to do him harm -- and the fire obeyed the command, and, instead of scorching him, provided a place of safety. This was a direct divine act, and hence a miracle. Now, we sometimes hear of men who, having applied certain chemicals to their body, can enter a fire without being scorched. This is not a miracle, for the operative cause is of a physical nature - that is, the chemicals. These chemicals are not known to people in general, and they are deluded into believing such a performance to be a "supernatural" event going beyond the realm of "the habitual". The Holy Qur'ān itself leaves no doubt as to a miracle being directly an act of Allah Himself. In the Battle of *Badr*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took up a handful of pebbles, and threw them at the army of the infidels, which blinded their eyes. Referring to this miracle, the Holy Qur'ān says: *وَمَا رَبُّكَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى*: "When you threw (the pebbles), it was not you who threw, but Allah who threw (them)" (8:17). The statement is explicit enough, and means that the miraculous result produced by a handful of pebbles was not the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the act of Allah Himself.

Miracle and Magic: How to distinguish between them?

Having explained the difference between the nature of a miracle and that of magic, we must now turn to another important question -- the results produced by each of them being in appearance the same, how is the common man to know the difference between the two? In fact, Allah has given to each certain characteristic features which can help the common man to distinguish miracles from magic. Firstly,

miracles are manifested through those whom everyone knows to be clean in body, pure in deeds and God-fearing. On the contrary, magic shows its effectiveness through those who are unclean in body, dirty in deeds, shunning the worship of Allah and His remembrance. This is a distinction which everyone can observe with his own eyes. Secondly, Allah has so ordained things that if a man pretends to be a prophet and claims to perform miracles, and yet tries to practise magic, his magic is never effective, but he can be effective in magic so long as he does not lay a claim to prophethood.

Magic and Prophets

As to the question whether magic can have an effect on prophets, we shall say that it can. As we have explained above, magic operates through physical causes, and prophets are not immune to the influence of physical causes. Just as they feel the effects of hunger and thirst, fall ill and get healed through the operation of apparent physical causes, in the same way they can be affected by the hidden operations of magic, which are no less physical. Let us add that being affected by magic does in no way go against the dignity of the station of prophethood -- no more than would thirst or hunger. Authentic *aḥādīth* report that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by the magic spell cast by the Jews, that he came to know of it through revelation, and that he took certain measures to free himself of its effects. The Holy Qur'ān too tells us how Sayyidnā Mūsā (Moses عليه السلام) experienced the effects of magic when the sorcerers cast a spell on his eyes, and the ropes and the sticks thrown by them began to look like running serpents, so that he was really frightened (20:66,67).

Injunctions of the Shari'ah with regard to Magic

As we have already said, *Sihr* (magic), in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, refers only to those practices in which one seeks the help of jinns and devils (*Shayāṭin*) by gaining their pleasure through the adoption of certain phrases or actions that involve infidelity (*Kufr*) and association (*Shirk*) or sin and transgression, and thus brings about certain extraordinary and unusual events. The magic of Babylon, mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān, was just this, and it is this form of magic which it condemns as infidelity or *Kufr* (Jaṣṣāṣ). According to Abu Mansur, the most valid and correct view in this respect is that each and every form of magic does

not, unconditionally and absolutely, constitute infidelity, but only that form which employs actions or speech contrary to the tenets of faith (*ʿĪmān*). (Rūh al-Maʿānī)

As everyone knows, the Holy Qurʾān and the *Hadīth* repeatedly enjoin upon the Muslims to consider the *Shayāṭīn* as one's enemies, to hate them and to curse them. Seeking to please them and to win their friendship, in contravention of such clear commandments, is in itself a sin. Moreover, they are pleased only when one indulges in *Kufr* (infidelity) or *Shirk* (association), and thus forfeits one's faith (*ʿĪmān*) altogether, or at least in disobedience and transgression, displeasing Allah and His angels by wallowing in dirt and impurity -- which becomes an additional sin. And if one makes use of magic for doing some harm to a human being unlawfully, it is still one more sin.

Thus, what the Holy Qurʾān and the *Hadīth* call *Sihr* can never be free either of infidelity in the matter of faith, or at least of infidelity in the matter of actions. If, in order to please the *Shayāṭīn*, one adopts actions or speech involving infidelity or association, one would be committing an act of real infidelity in the matter of faith; and even if one manages to avoid infidelity and association in speech or action, but indulges in other sinful activities, one would not remain free from infidelity in the matter of actions. This is what the Holy Qurʾān means when, in the present verses, it designates magic as *Kufr*.

To sum up, when magic employs actions or speech involving infidelity (such as seeking the help of *Shayāṭīn*, or believing the stars and the planets to be effective in themselves, or claiming prophethood by presenting the results of magical procedures as miracles, etc), such a magic, according to the consensus, constitutes infidelity; and when magic does not involve acts of infidelity but only the commission of sinful acts, such a magic is a major sin.

Now, let us add some subsidiary injunctions with regard to magic.

- (1) Since magic is not usually free from infidelity in the matter of faith or in that of action, it necessarily follows that it is forbidden to learn or teach or practice it. Some jurists, however, allow one to learn magic for the purpose of protecting Muslims from harm, but one must not try to learn more than is necessary.

- (2) If in preparing charms and amulets the help of Jinns and *Shayāṭin* has been sought, they too come under the category of *Sihr*, and are thus forbidden. If the words employed in the charms are vague, and one does not exactly know what they mean but suspects that they are invocations addressed to idols or *Shayāṭin*, even such charms are forbidden.
- (3) As for the other forms of magic beside the *Sihr*, like that of Babylon, condemned by the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, if they involve *Kufr* and *Shirk* in some way, they too are forbidden.
- (4) If there is a form of magic which employs words or actions or other elements to which the *Shari'ah* does not object, then it is permissible on condition that it is not used for a purpose which the *Shari'ah* forbids.
- (5) It is permissible to use the verses of the Holy Qur'ān, or the Divine Names or the words of the *Ḥadīth* in preparing charms and amulets, or as a recitation or invocation for gaining divine help in order to attain a desired end. But if such a use of the sacred texts or words is made for a reprehensible purpose, like doing harm to someone without an excuse, even that is forbidden. (Shamī, *Fatāwā Qadī Khān*)

A doctrinal point

Verse 102 says: "They could not thus do any harm to anyone, except with the permission of Allah". This shows that causes in themselves and by themselves cannot produce the effects one usually associates with them, and it is Allah who creates the effects as much as the causes. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verse 104

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انْظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا
وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ١٠٤

O those who believe, do not say "*Rā'inā*", but say "*Unẓurnā*", and listen. And for the unbelievers there is a grievous punishment. (Verse 104)

Among other perversities, some of the Jews invented a new mischief. When they presented themselves before the Holy Prophet

ﷺ, they would address him with the word *Rā'inā*, which, in Arabic, means "be mindful of us", but is, in Hebrew, a curse. The latter is what they intended, but the Arabs, not knowing Hebrew, could not see the point, and some Muslims too, with the Arabic sense of the word in mind, began to address the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the same manner to the great glee of the Jews who had thus found a way of insulting him openly, and had even tricked the Muslims into joining them. In order to frustrate the design of the Jews, the Holy Qur'an commands the Muslims to use the word *Unẓurnā* instead of *Rā'inā*, for the meanings of the two words are the same in Arabic. The verse also announces a dire punishment to the Jews for showing disrespect to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and for trying to be clever with him.

The verse describes the insolent Jews as *Kfirīn* (infidels), which means that being intentionally disrespectful towards a prophet even in an indirect manner constitutes infidelity.

The verse shows that if a perfectly legitimate action on one's part provides room for others to commit illegitimate actions, even the legitimate action no longer remains lawful for one. For example, if a permissible action on the part of a scholar is likely to lead the ignorant into error and to induce them to do impermissible things, that permissible action will then become forbidden for him, provided that the action concerned is not essential according to the Shari'ah and is not included among its objects. The Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith* provide many instances of this nature. For example, before the advent of Islam the Quraysh had, in rebuilding the Ka'bah, made certain modifications in the design set by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (Abraham عليه السلام). A *hadith* reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ wished to demolish the present structure, and to build it again according to the Abrahamic pattern, but he did not do so, for such an action could have led ignorant people into misunderstanding and error.

In the vocabulary of the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence, such injunctions are described as *سد الذرائع* : *Sadd al-Dharā'i*: "removing the means (to error)" and are accepted by all the jurists -- those of the Hanbali school being very particular about them. (Qurṭubī)

Verse 105

مَا يَوْدُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ

عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ
وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ۝

Those who disbelieve from among the people of the Book, or idolaters, do not like that any good should come to you from your Lord. But Allah chooses for His grace whom He wills. And Allah is the Lord of great bounty. (Verse 105)

The previous verse told us how the Jews behaved towards the Holy Prophet ﷺ; the present verse speaks of their behaviour towards Muslims in general. Some of the Jews used to assure the Muslims of their sincerity towards them, and to pretend that they would very much have liked the Muslims to have received from Allah religious doctrines and commandments superior to what they themselves had received, so that they too could accept them, but unfortunately Islam did not seem to be a better religion. The Holy Qur'an refutes their claim to be the well-wishers of the Muslims, and declares that the infidels, whether they be the Jews or the associators, are so jealous of Muslims that they can never like the idea of their receiving from Allah any kind of blessing whatsoever. Of course, this jealousy can do no harm to the Muslims, for Allah is Beneficent and All-Powerful, and can shower his special blessings on whomsoever He chooses.

These Jews used to make two claims -- firstly, that Judaism was a better religion than Islam; secondly, that they were the well-wishers of the Muslims. They could not establish the first of these claims on the basis of any valid argument, and it remained an empty assertion. Moreover, the difference between Islam and Judaism does not primarily depend on the question of one being better than the other. For, when something new comes to abrogate something older, the latter is automatically given up -- and Allah has sent Islam to abrogate all the earlier religions. The fact being so obvious, the Holy Qur'an says nothing in refutation of the first claim, and takes up only the second. The *mushrikīn* (associators) have been mentioned here along with the Jews for the sake of emphasis, and to point out that Jews cannot be the well-wishers of Muslims any more than *mushrikīn* can -- the two being alike in their hatred of Muslims.

Verses 106 - 107

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ
 أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ
 السَّمُوتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ۝

Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one equal to it. Do you not know that Allah is powerful over everything? Do you not know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And, you have none, other than Allah, to protect or help you. (Verses 106 - 107)

At first, Muslims used to pray with their faces turned towards the *Baytul-Maqdis* at Jerusalem; later on, Allah commanded them to turn towards the Ka'bah. Similarly, certain other injunctions were abrogated altogether, or replaced by others. This provided the Jews and some of the associators too with an occasion to taunt the Muslims, and to say that such changes were made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself and not by Allah. Their purpose was to sow the seed of doubt in the mind of the Muslims with regard to the Holy Qur'ān being a book revealed by Allah. They used to argue that if everything that Allah revealed was good, as the Muslims affirmed, why should one injunction be replaced by another? For, it would only mean that one of the two injunctions must be good, and the other evil, but no divine revelation can possibly be evil. Putting these two premises together, the Jews tried to draw the conclusion that the Holy Qur'ān could not be a revealed book.

The present verse refutes this line of argument, and, in effect, points out that abrogation does not mean replacing good with evil, or vice versa, which should imply the possibility of the presence of evil in divine revelation, but that everything that Allah reveals to His prophets is good, and that what has been abrogated is good as much as what abrogated it.

The verse declares that if Allah chooses to abrogate an injunction contained in a certain verse, while retaining the verse itself as a part of the Holy Qur'ān, or chooses to remove a verse from the memories of

men altogether, there is nothing objectionable in it, for Allah alone knows the wisdom that lies in His choice, and He makes these changes for the good of men. In fact, He always sends another verse or injunction better than, or at least equal to, what He has abrogated. Allah being omnipotent and omniscient, He possesses the authority to change His commandments as He likes, and He also knows what is good for men at a particular time, and makes these changes according to this knowledge. Men have no friend or helper except Allah. As friend, Allah keeps their good in view while laying down injunctions. As helper, He protects those who obey His commandments against the hostility of their foes - but if the obedient are to receive blessings in the other world greater than the harm they have to suffer in this world, the apparent domination of their foes does not really matter.

What is *Naskh*? (Abrogation)

Verse 106 speaks of Allah abrogating certain verses, or making men forget certain others. The first phrase of the verse, thus covers all the possible forms in which a verse of the Qur'ān can be abrogated. The Arabic word in the text is *Naskh*, which has two lexical meanings - (1) to write, and (2) to abolish, to repeal. According to the consensus of all the commentators, the word has been employed in this verse in the second sense -- that is, the repeal or abrogation of an injunction. So, in the terminology of the Holy Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*, *Naskh* (نسخ) signifies the promulgation of an injunction in place of another -- whether the later injunction merely consists in the repeal of the earlier or, substitutes a new regulation in its place. The other form of *Naskh* mentioned in this verse is that sometimes Allah made the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the blessed Companions forget a certain verse altogether. The commentators have cited several instances of this kind of *Naskh*, and the purpose in such cases has usually been to repeal a certain regulation.

The kinds of abrogation

Making laws and repealing them to promulgate new ones in their stead is a regular and well-known practice in human governments and institutions. But in the case of man-made laws abrogation takes place sometimes because the law-makers do not understand the situation properly while making a certain law, and have to change it when they

realize their mistakes, and sometimes because when a law is promulgated, it is in accord with the prevailing situation, but when quite unforeseen changes alter the situation, the law too has to be changed. But these two forms of abrogation are out of the question in the case of divine injunctions.

There is, however, a third form too. The lawmaker makes a law, knowing fully well that the circumstances are going to change in such a way that the law will no longer be suitable for the new situation; so, when the situation changes as he already knew, he changes the law too, and promulgates a new one which he had thought of at the very start. For example, a physician prescribes a medicine for a patient in view of his present conditions, but he knows that when the patient has been using it for two days, his condition will change and require a new medicine -- with this realization, he prescribes a medicine suitable for that day, but two days later, when circumstances have changed, he prescribes a new one. The physician can easily give the patient written instructions for the whole course of the treatment, with all the changes in the medicines duly indicated. But this would be putting too much burden on the already feeble patient, and there would also be the danger of some harm through a possible error or misunderstanding.

This is the only form of abrogation which can occur, and has been occurring in divine injunctions and in divine books. Every new Shari'ah and every new revealed Book has been abrogating many injunctions of the earlier Shari'ah and of the earlier Book. Similarly, within the same Shari'ah, too, it has always happened that a certain law was in force for a time, but Divine Wisdom chose to abrogate it and to promulgate another in its place. A *ḥadīth* reported by Muslim says: *لم تكن نبوة قط الا تاسخت* : "There has never been a prophethood which did not abrogate some injunctions." This is a principle which it should not be difficult to understand. It was only some malicious and ignorant Jews who confused the divine abrogation of injunctions with the two forms of the repeal of man-made laws, and began, in their impudence, to taunt the Holy Prophet ﷺ - in reply to which, as we have said, these two verses were revealed. (Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr etc.)

As for the Muslims, it was probably in their desire to avoid giving occasion to the enemies of Islam for such taunts that some from among

the *Mu'tazilah* tried to explain away the whole question of *Naskh*. Logically speaking, there is a possibility -- so ran their argument -- of abrogation in the case of divine injunctions, and the possibility cannot be denied on any rational ground, but abrogation has not actually occurred in the Holy Qur'ān, and there is no verse in the Holy Book which abrogates another (*Nāsikh*) and no verse which has been abrogated (*Mansūkh*). This view is attributed to Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī, but the 'Ulama' in general have always rejected this opinion, and refuted the argument. Thus, we read in "Rūh al-Ma'ānī":

واتفقت اهل الشرائع على جواز النسخ و وقوعه وخالف اليهود
غير العيسوية في جوازه وقالوا: يمتنع عقلاً وأبو مسلم الاصفهاني في
وقوعه فقال: إنه وإن جاز عقلاً لكنه لم يقع

"The people belonging to all the Shari'ahs are unanimous in accepting the validity of abrogation and its actual occurrence both. Only the Jews -- with the exception of their 'Isawiyah sect have denied the possibility of abrogation, and Abū Muslim al-Isfahānī has denied its occurrence, for he says that it is rationally possible, but has not actually taken place."

Imām al-Qurṭubī says:

معرفة هذا الباب أكيدة و فائدته عظيمة لاتستغنى عن معرفته العلماء
ولا ينكره إلا الجهلة الاغبياء

"It is essential to understand the question of abrogation, and great benefits flow from such an understanding, which no scholar can dispense with, and no one can deny abrogation except the ignorant and the dull-headed."

In this connection, al-Qurṭubī has related a very illuminating incident. The fourth *Khalīfah* Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه saw a man preaching in the mosque. He asked the people what the man was doing. On being told that he was preaching, the blessed *Khalīfah* said: "He is not doing anything of the sort, but only announcing to the people that he is such and such a man and the son of such and such, and asking them to recognize and remember him." Calling the man to his side, he asked: "Do you know the injunctions which have been abrogated and those which have abrogated the earlier ones?" When he confessed that he did not, the *Khalīfah* turned him out of the mosque, and ordered him never to preach there.